

Mold Inspection Preparation Checklist

Everything you need to do before, during, and after a professional mold inspection

- ✓ Pre-inspection preparation checklist (12 items)
- ✓ What to expect during the inspection
- ✓ Understanding your lab results
- ✓ Post-inspection action plan and next steps

Pre-Inspection Preparation Checklist

24-48 Hours Before the Inspection:

- ☐ Do NOT clean or disturb any visible mold growth — the inspector needs to see it
- ☐ Do NOT run HVAC, fans, or open windows for 24 hours before air sampling (closed-building conditions)
- ☐ Turn off air purifiers 24 hours before — they can skew air sample results
- ☐ Document all visible mold with photos (include a ruler or coin for scale)
- ☐ Note all areas with musty odors, even if no visible mold
- ☐ List any known water damage history (leaks, floods, burst pipes, roof damage)
- ☐ Locate and mark any areas of recent water intrusion
- ☐ Ensure access to all areas: attic hatch, crawlspace entrance, utility closets, behind large appliances

Day of Inspection

- ☐ Ensure HVAC has been off for 24+ hours (for air sampling accuracy)
- ☐ Keep windows and exterior doors closed
- ☐ Move furniture away from walls where mold is suspected (12+ inches clearance)
- ☐ Clear access paths to attic, crawlspace, basement, garage, and under-sink areas
- ☐ Have your list of concerns, symptoms, and water damage history ready for the inspector
- ☐ Keep pets confined to a separate area during the inspection

Critical

The 24-hour closed-building condition is essential for accurate air sampling. If windows have been open or HVAC running, air sample results may not reflect actual indoor mold levels. Some inspectors will reschedule rather than test under compromised conditions.

What to Expect During the Inspection

The Inspection Process — Step by Step

Step-by-step visual

- 1 Interview (10-15 min):** Inspector asks about health symptoms, water damage history, HVAC age, known moisture problems, and specific concerns.
- 2 Visual inspection (30-60 min):** Systematic walk-through of entire property. Inspector examines walls, ceilings, floors, windows, HVAC, plumbing, attic, crawlspace, and basement. Uses flashlight for dark areas.
- 3 Moisture assessment (15-30 min):** Moisture meter readings on walls, floors, and ceilings. May include thermal imaging (infrared camera) to identify hidden moisture behind surfaces.
- 4 Air sampling (15-20 min):** Spore trap cassettes placed in key areas (typically living area, basement, attic) plus mandatory outdoor control sample. Each sample runs 5-10 minutes.
- 5 Surface sampling (if needed, 10-15 min):** Tape lift or swab samples from visible mold growth for species identification.
- 6 Documentation (throughout):** Photos of all findings, moisture readings, sample locations, and areas of concern.
- 7 Preliminary findings (10 min):** Inspector shares initial observations. Full results require lab analysis (3-7 days).

Total time on-site

1.5-3 hours for a standard residential inspection. Commercial properties may take 3-6 hours depending on size and complexity.

Understanding Your Lab Results

How to Read Your Mold Lab Report

Key metrics explained

Term	What It Means	Action Level
Spore count (spores/m3)	Number of mold spores per cubic meter of air	Compare indoor vs. outdoor — indoor should be lower
Species identification	The type(s) of mold present	Some species (Stachybotrys, Chaetomium) indicate chronic water damage
Indoor/Outdoor ratio	Comparison of indoor spore levels to outdoor baseline	Ratio > 1.0 for any species suggests indoor source
Total spore count	Sum of all species detected	No universal "safe" number — relative comparison matters
ERMI score	DNA-based moldiness index (-10 to 20+ scale)	Score > 5 indicates elevated mold; > 10 is significant

Common species and what they indicate

Mold Species	Commonly Found	What It Suggests
Cladosporium	Everywhere (outdoor/indoor)	Normal at low levels; indicates ventilation issues at high levels
Aspergillus / Penicillium	Indoor environments	Elevated levels suggest moisture problem; health concern for immunocompromised
Stachybotrys (black mold)	Water-damaged drywall/cellulose	Chronic water intrusion; requires professional remediation
Chaetomium	Severely water-damaged materials	Chronic moisture; often found with Stachybotrys
Alternaria	Bathrooms, basements, HVAC	Common allergen; indicates dampness

No universal "safe" mold level exists.

The EPA does not set numerical standards for indoor mold. Your lab report must be interpreted by comparing indoor levels to the outdoor control sample and evaluating which species are present. This is why a qualified inspector — not just a lab report — matters.

Post-Inspection Decision Flowchart

What to Do After You Get Your Results

Decision tree

Lab results show indoor levels LOWER than outdoor?

- No mold problem identified
- Action: No remediation needed. Address any moisture issues found during visual inspection to prevent future growth.

Lab results show indoor levels HIGHER than outdoor for common species (*Cladosporium*, *Aspergillus*/*Penicillium*)?

- Likely moisture issue
- Action: Identify and fix the moisture source (leak, condensation, poor ventilation). Clean minor surface mold yourself. Retest in 30 days if levels were significantly elevated.

Lab results show *Stachybotrys*, *Chaetomium*, or other "water damage indicator" species?

- Professional remediation recommended
- Action: Get the inspector's written remediation protocol. Hire a SEPARATE remediation company. Post-remediation clearance testing is mandatory.

Health symptoms present regardless of lab results?

- Action: Consult a physician. Consider comprehensive testing (ERMI). Address all moisture issues regardless of spore counts.

Mold Prevention Maintenance Checklist

Ongoing Prevention — Reduce Your Risk Year-Round

Quarterly checklist

- ☐ Check under all sinks for leaks or condensation
- ☐ Inspect caulk/grout in bathrooms and kitchen — reseal if cracked
- ☐ Clean HVAC drip pans and condensate lines
- ☐ Check basement/crawlspace for standing water or new moisture
- ☐ Run bathroom exhaust fans during and 30 min after every shower
- ☐ Verify clothes dryer vents to the outside (not into attic or crawlspace)

Annual checklist

- ☐ Inspect roof for missing/damaged shingles and flashing
- ☐ Clean gutters and verify downspouts direct water 6+ feet from foundation
- ☐ Have HVAC system inspected and ductwork checked for moisture
- ☐ Check attic for condensation, especially at roof/wall junctions
- ☐ Inspect crawlspace vapor barrier — replace if torn or displaced
- ☐ Test indoor humidity with hygrometer — maintain 30–50% relative humidity

The #1 mold prevention tool costs \$15.

A digital hygrometer in your basement or most humid room. If relative humidity stays above 60% consistently, mold growth is almost guaranteed. Dehumidify to 30–50%.

Cost Comparison: DIY Testing vs. Professional Inspection

Side-by-side comparison

Component	DIY Test Kit	Professional Inspection
Cost	\$30-\$50 (kit + lab fee)	\$300-\$750
Air sampling	1 sample, no outdoor control	3-5 samples with outdoor baseline
Species identification	Basic (may only report "mold present")	Full species identification and count
Moisture assessment	Not included	Professional moisture meter + thermal imaging
Visual inspection	You walk through yourself	Trained eye: attic, crawlspace, HVAC, behind walls
Written protocol	Not included	Detailed remediation recommendations
Court/insurance accepted	Generally not	Yes, with certified inspector
Accuracy	Low (single point-in-time, no baseline)	High (multiple samples, professional methodology)
Best for	Quick peace of mind	Real estate, health concerns, insurance, litigation

DIY kits have a place

— they're fine for a quick check when you have no symptoms and no visible mold. For anything involving real estate transactions, health concerns, insurance claims, or legal matters, a professional inspection is the only credible option.

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